A DISSERTATION ON THE GOSPEL-DÆMONIACKS.

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DISSERTATION

ON THE

THE EDITOR TO THE READER.

THE Manuſcript of this Work was put into my Hands, by my late Friend the Author, who, at that Time, gave me ſtrong Reaſons for not printing it; which Reaſons being now at an End; I have carefully read it; and finding it contain, ſo much good Senſe, ſound Learning, and the ſtricteſt Regard for Truth; I think it would be inexcuſable to deprive the World of ſo valuable a Preſent.

Preſent. This is the Motive which makes me conſider it as my Duty to print it: and I make no doubt but the Reader will be entirely of my Opinion, when he has had the Satiſfaction of peruſing it. I ſhould inform him it was occaſioned by the Biſhop of *St. David*'s Tract on the ſame Subject.

A

DISSERTATION, &c.

MR. Woolſton in the impious Treatiſes he has lately publiſhed upon the Miracles of our bleſſed Saviour, aſſerts that what is recorded of them by the Evangeliſts, is not to be underſtood in the literal Meaning, but as only prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be myſteriouſly done by Jeſus. The Biſhop of St. David's in anſwering his ſcurrilous Libels, having a juſt Indignation at his Manner of treating our moſt holy Religion, when he comes to the Devils entering into the Herd of Swine, runs, it may be, into a contrary Miſtake, by keeping too cloſe to the Letter of the Story, and has more embarraſſed himſelf in ſuppoſing our Saviour to have "ſuffered about three "Devils to enter into each Hog, p. 159." than if he had quite excluded the Devil from having any Thing really to do in the whole Affair. This indeed would have been deny-

ing the Reality of diabolical Poſſeſſions; and whether the Biſhop might have done ſo with Juſtice and Truth, is the Subject of the following Treatiſe, And here I muſt warn my Reader not to expect Certainty or Demonſtration; the Nature of the Subject being ſuch, that probable Conjecture is, I think, all it will admit of. The moſt I pretend to is to produce ſuch Proof as may engage the Mind to judge the Propoſition I advance to be true rather than the contrary.

That there may be a great many different Ranks and Orders of ſpiritual Beings, is a Propoſition which has nothing in it beyond our Belief or contradictory to our clear and diſtinct Knowledge. It may be there is a greater and fuller Variety in the ſpiritual, and greater Difference from one another, than in the animal Creation. But then it muſt be acknowledged that our natural Reaſon, notwithſtanding the vaſt Extent of the Penetration and Elevation of our Thoughts, ſtops ſhort here, that our Underſtanding affords us, at moſt, but a bare Conjecture; and that we can know nothing certainly in this Particular but by a divine Revelation. Theſe Spirits, whatever Sorts or Kinds they are of,

whether good or bad, are beyond the Diſcovery of our Underſtandings; our natural Faculties as much fail us in finding out wherein they differ from us, as from one another; and their Nature, Power and Condition, are equally beyond the Diſcovery of Reaſon.

Thus bounded are our natural Faculties; and the Aſſiſtance divine Revelation has afforded us, is not, perhaps, ſo great, as ſome Gentlemen may imagine. As to evil ſpiritual Beings, which is the Point before us, the Old Teſtament is ſilent. Such Texts as may be ſuppoſed to relate to any ſuch Thing, we ſhall by and by have a more convenient Place to take Notice of. All the Aſſiſtance we are therefore to have in our Knowledge of them, we muſt look for in the Name St. Jude ſpeaks of an Order of "Angels which kept "not their firſt Eſtate, but left their own "Habitation, and are reſerved in everlaſting "Chains under Darkneſs unto the Judgment "of the great Day*." And St. *Peter* tells us that God had "delivered them into "Chains of Darkneſs, to be reſerved unto "Judgment ‡." But neither of theſe Apoſtles mention any Revelation they had of this,

 which

* V. 6. ‡ 2 *Epb.* ii. 4.

which is frequent in Scripture in the like Caſes. I ſhould therefore, rank this Story of the fallen Angels with what the former of theſe Apoſtles tells us of Michael's diſputing with the Devil, and with St. Paul's giving the Names of *Jannes* and *Jambres* to Pharaoh's Magicians * which are owned by all to be only Opinions which were current amongſt the *Jews* at that Time. But if we do acknowledge an Order of evil Spirits, (which I own a Scripture Doctrine) I cannot ſee but that we muſt of Neceſſity ſuppoſe them to have fallen from a happy State; for we cannot conceive of an infinite good God, that he ſhuold create a Rank of Beings in themſelves evil, or, without their own Fault, to ſuffer Miſery. But over and above this, we have in the New Teſtment a Devil repreſented to us as "the God of this World‡, "the Prince of the Power of the Air †, and the whole World is ſaid to be "his," and every Thing in it "at his Diſpoſal ‖." But whether this Devil, and what is ſaid of him, is to be underſtood literally or metaphorically, I ſhall not here enquire, but take

* 2 *Tim.* iii. 8. ‡ 2 *Cor.* iv. 14. † *Eph.* ii. 2.
‖ *Mat.* iv. 9.

take it in the Biſhop of St. David's Senſe; though "'tis manifeſt," ſays the Dean of Sarum, "all that is intended in Scripture, "is only to repreſent that State of Sin and "Guilt Mankind are in; to let them know "what is required of them for the future, in "Order for the Recovery out of it *."

But it being neither my Opinion nor Intention to deny the Exiſtence of an Order of malignant evil Spirits, ſuch as are called Devils, let us, having ſuppoſed their Being, ſee what we ſhall be the nearer to the Point of their poſſeſſing Men. I believe neither the Biſhop of St. David's nor the Zealots for the Reality of Poſſeſſions, are for making even the Prince of theſe Spirits, with the Manichæans an infinite evil Principle; but attribute to him an extenſive Power and Dominion. It is impoſſible for us to know, as I have already taken Notice, unleſs it had been revealed to us, what the Power either of a good or bad Spirit is; we muſt not therefore pretend to ſet Bounds to it, or to ſay, how far it can reach and no farther. But theſe being inviſible Agents, I think we may pronounce of them, that if they have any

* Origin of Moral Evil, p. 273.

any Power at all of acting upon Matter, tho' we ſuppoſe it to be no greater than ours are endued with, they are capable of performing Things ſurpriſing to us, ſuch as are really and truly Miracles; that they may bring upon Men innumerable Calamities, and deſtroy Body or Life. But then while we ſuppoſe that they can act upon Matter, or whatſoever other Powers we imagine them indued with, we muſt acknowledge them to depend upon the ſupreme Being; and that whatever they are impowered to do, muſt be by the Permiſſion and good Will of God in ſuch Manner as is agreeable to him in the Adminiſtration of the Univerſe †. And hence

† And this ſeems to be his Lordſhip's Opinion, for having p. 8, told us that "a true Miracle is properly a ſuper-"natural Operation, diſagreeing with and repugnant to "the uſual Courſe of Things, and the known Laws of Na-"ture, either as to the Subject-Matter, or the Manner of "its Performance." He preſently after ſays, p 9. "Tho' "it may be allowed that there are Beings in the Spiritual "World that are capable of performing Things above the "Power of Men, and therefore amazing to Mankind; yet "it is juſtly denied, that any created Beings, and conſe-"quently Agents of a limited Power, are capable of per-"forming the aforeſaid Power and real Miracles, either thoſe "of the *Matter* or of the *Manner*, independently of God; "(as is ſuppoſed in the preſent Caſe) ſince great as their Power

as

hence it muſt follow, that if theſe Spirits do at any Time perform any Thing miraculous; if they bring any Calamity upon Mankind; it muſt be by the immediate Permiſſion of God, who, we cannot but ſuppoſe, has reſtrained their acting, and given them Laws and Bounds which they cannot paſs: for every ſubordinate intelligent Agent muſt be reſtrained by him from altering or interpoſing in the regular Courſe of Things in this lower World ‡. So that if we ſuppoſe the Calamities the Dæmoniacs in the Goſpels ſuffered, were occaſioned by the real Poſſeſſion of evil Spirits, we muſt acknowledge them to be miraculous Effects proceeding from the immediate

" is, it is not infinite, and therefore cannot perform thoſe " Operations, either as to the *Matter* or the *Manner* of " them; no leſs Power than what is infinite being able to " overcome the otherwiſe inſuperable Difficulties and na- " tural Impoſſibilities that attend them."

‡ Or as his Lordſhip goes on and argues, p. 10. " If " any ſpiritual Agents, placed in different Ranks between " God and Mankind, were ſuppoſed to perform ſuch mi- " raculous Actions independently of God, they muſt like- " wiſe be ſuppoſed to have an equal Power of creating and " reſtoring with God himſelf, and therefore not to be in- " ferior, limited and created Beings; which is contrary to " the very Suppoſition of their Nature, and is ſo abſurd as " conſeqentially to introduce a Plurality of Beings of in- " finite Power, and therefore of Rival-Gods."

mediate Permiſſion of God; and that there were as many of theſe Miracles as Dæmoniacs. And we ſhall be hard put to it to find any good Reaſon, or wiſe End or Purpoſe, for which God ſhould permit ſuch a Species of Miracles to be wrought in the Goſpel Age, and to be ſo laviſh of them, after all other Miracles, and even the Spirit of Prophecy, had ceaſed in his Church for 400 Years *. We can't ſay that God made uſe of Devils to puniſh particular Perſons for their Sins; for beſides that there is no Reaſon why they ſhould be ſo puniſhed in that Age more than in any other, we find Infants amongſt theſe Dæmoniacs, who could have no Sins of their own to be puniſhed for, and that in ſuch an extraordinary Manner, *Mat.* xvii. 18.

But to leave this dry Reaſoning; let us inquire how the Jews came by their Notion of Poſſeſſions, and how we are to understand our Saviour's Miracles of curing the Dæmoniacs, particularly the Miracle which occaſioned theſe Reflections, which has ſtronger Marks of a real Poſſeſſion than any of the reſt.

Dr.

* We cannot conceive it (ſays Biſhop Leng. p. 415.) to be a Thing becoming, or worthy of the divine Majeſty, to work a Miracle for no End or Purpoſe at all.

Dr. Prideaux, Part I. l. 6. having obſerved that the Babyloniſh Captivity cured the Jews of their Idolatry, ſays, " that they would " have been unblamable therein, had they " not over done it by adding corrupt Tra- " ditions of their own deviſing." Amongſt the Traditions the Doctor alludes to, I take it, was their Opinion of the Devil's exerciſing a very extenſive Power.

It is, I think, clear that the Jews had no ſuch Belief before the Captivity: Thoſe Texts in the Old Teſtament, which may, perhaps, at firſt Sight ſeem to favour ſuch an Opinion, have a quite different Thing in View. Our Tranſlators do indeed render the Word *Searim*, *Seirim*, or *Sehirim*, Lev. xvii. 7.— 2 Cron. xi. 15. and Pſ. 106. 37. by *Devils*. But the Paſſage in Leviticus plainly relates to the Idolatries the Iſraelites had been guilty of; as that in the Chronicles does to *Jeroboam*'s *Calves*; and that in the Pſalms to the Idols they had ſacrificed their Sons and Daughters unto. Now we no where find * that they ever worſhiped Devils, or any evil Spirits. The Greeks,

 Romans,

* Notwithſtanding what his Lordſhip has ſaid, p. 158.

Romans, and other Nations, did indeed, in after Times, worſhip the Eumenides, Parcæ, Furiæ, Diræ * Ultrices, and ſuch like Divinities, to avert their Malice, and keep them from doing them Harm: But we have no Reaſon to believe from any Thing we meet with in Scripture, that the Jews were ever infected with that Idolatry. God frequently upbraids them by his Prophets for worſhiping "the Hoſt of Heaven, "the Gods of the Amorites, &c. Idols "which had Mouths and ſpoke not, &c." but no where with the Worſhip of any evil Being, which one can't conceive but he would have done, had they been guilty of any ſuch Thing. And whoſoever conſiders the Story of Aaron's and Jeroboam's Calves, which Idolatry is particularly alluded to in the Places before us, will never be able to bring himſelf to believe that they were made to repreſent Devils, or any evil Being, but that God *who had brought them out of the Land of Egypt.* But the ſame Word, as it is uſed by Iſaiah xiii. 21. and xxxiv. 14. where

* The Diræ are placed by Virgil by the Throne of Jove, from whence they were ſent to puniſh Men,

Hæ Jovis ad Solium ſævique in Limine Regis
Apparent. Æn. xii. ver. 849.

where our Tranſlators have rendered it *Satyrs*, does, I think, plainly ſhew what we are to underſtand by it. The Prophet in the firſt of thoſe Places foretelling the Ruin and Deſolation of Babylon; in the other, of Idumæa, ſays, that they ſhall be an Habitation for doleful Creatures; and, among others of that Kind, for the *Seirim*, which Word properly ſignifies *Goats*, and ought ſo to be interpreted in thoſe, and the other Places where the Idols of the Heathen are alluded to, they worſhiping their Deities under the Form of Goats, and other Piloſi, which every one knows who is but the leaſt acquainted with their Idolatries. And accordingly the Seventy render the Paſſage in Leviticus by ματαια, Vanitates, which agrees well enough with ſuch Idols. And again, the Place in the Chronicles by τοις ειδωλοις και τοις ματαιοις, Idolis & Vanitatibus.

But there is another Word which our Tranſlators have likewiſe rendered by *Devils*; it is *Schedim*; we meet with it Deut. xxxii. 17. where Moſes ſpeaks likewiſe of the Idolatries the Jews had provoked God with. But this Word, as is generally agreed, im-

ports as much as *Perditores*, or *Vaſtatores*, and if we take it in that Senſe meant properly enough, from the Effect, be given to the Idols the Children of Iſrael had worſhiped, they leading thoſe who paid them any Adoration, into the greateſt Perdition and Miſery. But "ſome, ſays Patrick, "think they are called Schedim ironically, "by Way of Scorn, the true God being "Schaddai, the omnipotent and all-ſufficient; "and theſe called, by Way of Mockery, "counterfeit Gods, who had no Power to "help their Worſhipers, nor were ſufficient "to preſerve themſelves." Whichſoever of theſe Senſes we take the Word in, we ſhall have no Reaſon to believe Moſes had any evil Being in View. But the learned Reader, if he be not ſatisfied with this, may turn to Van Dale De Origine ac Progreſſu Idololatriæ et Superſtitionum, c. v. where he will find more Things in favour of this Opinion, than I have either Inclination or Time to tranſcribe.

But the Jews were no ſooner carried captive to Babylon, than they imbibed new Opinions, and received ſuch Principles from Chal-

dæiſm, as they were not before acquainted with. They there found the old Magian Religion, the eſtabliſhed Worſhip; "this "held the Being of two firſt Cauſes, the "firſt Light, or the good God, who was "the Author of all Good; and the other "Darkneſs, or the evil God, who was the "Author of all Evil *." This they embraced pretty much in the ſame Manner as Zoroaſter ſoon after reformed it, who holding as they did the Principle of "a One ſu-"preme Being, independent and ſelf-exiſting "from all Eternity, taught that under him "there were two Angels, one the Angel of "Light, who is the Author and Director "of all Good; and the other the Angel of "Darkneſs, who is the Author and Direc-"tor of all Evil ‡." And being once prejudiced in Favour of the Exiſtence of this evil Angel, to avoid making him an infinite Being, as they ſuppoſed he muſt have been, if he had been able in his own Perſon to produce all the Evil, both natural and moral, which is viſible in the World: They imagined he had a Multitude who acted in Subordination

* Prideaux, P. I. l. 4. ‡ Ibid.

ordination to one another under him; and obſerving the abominable Rites and Impieties with which the Heathens worſhiped their Gods and Dæmons, they concluded them to be no other than theſe evil Angels, and from their being worſhiped under the Form of Goats, Monkeys, &c. ſuppoſed that they had appeared to their Devotees in the Shape and Figure of thoſe Animals. They ranged them in the ſame Order, and under the ſame Denominations as the Heathens did their Idols; and underſtood ſuch Paſſages in the Old Teſtament, as related to the Pagan Divinities of their new invented evil Beings, to whom they gave a very large and extenſive Power, even the poſſeſſing of not only ſuch Perſons as we may ſuppoſe puniſhed by God for their Sins, but ſuch as were innocent, incapable of ſinning, or making any Trial of their Faith *. Their Phariſees, and the Talmudiſts their Followers, went on, improved the Superſtition, and invented monſtrous idle Tales of theſe evil Spirits, and deviſed ſuch ridiculous Conceits of the Manner in which they were generated, as would ſurfeit

* Mat. xvii, 18.

ſurfeit a Reader; and having from thence conceived a Sort of Monſters and Prodigies, ſuch as the *Onocentauri*, *Sirenes*, *Lamiæ*, &c. explained the prophetical Writings of them, in Places where the Prophets themſelves never dreamt of any ſuch Things.

The Power they attributed to theſe evil Spirits, as well as the idle Stories they told of them, could not but be too groſs a Doctrine to be received by All, eſpecially after the Canon of Scripture was ſettled, and they had thoſe holy Writings read and explained to them in their Synagogues. I make no doubt but they who ſearched fartheſt into the Nature of Things, oppoſed the generally-received Opinion, eſpecially that of Poſſeſſions. They could not, it may be, conceive how a pure ſpiritual Subſtance could, without the Permiſſion or Interpoſition of God, immediately act upon Matter; they could not but ſay that this was not according to the known Laws of Nature; and that for God to permit it, would at leaſt be ſeeming to act in Concert with an evil Being; and that if it could be ſuppoſed that ſuch a Spirit had once entered into a Man, ſuch Perſon muſt have

two

two Principles of Action within him at once, the Devil and his own Soul, which muſt act by Turns, or both together; and it can't well be conceived that a Body ſo acted upon, could ſubſiſt long; and what ſurpriſing Effects muſt not be expected from it while it did? They muſt have expected that theſe Devils, though finite, ſhould have done a great deal of Miſchief which they did not do; that ſome one of them having once had the Poſſeſſion and Power over a human Body, inſtead of tormenting the Wretch, ſhould, as when he informed the Serpent, have been for advancing the Kingdom of Darkneſs, have prefered new Arguments in Behalf of it, and debauched the Morals of the People.

I can't help conjecturing that this gave the firſt Riſe to the antienteſt Sect amongſt the Jews, who were called Sadducees. It ſprung up, it is certain, ſoon after the Return from the Babyloniſh Captivity, and, as Dr. Prideaux tells us of the Profeſſors of it, "at "firſt they were no more than what the "Karraites are now, that is, they would "not receive the Traditions of the Elders, "but ſtuck to the written Word only. And-

"as

" as long, ſays he, as they proceeded no far-
" ther, they were in the right; but after-
" wards they imbibed other Doctrines *."
Amongſt theſe Traditions of the Elders, which they rejected, I ſuppoſe was the Doctrine of the Being and Power of evil Angels. Joſephus, who beſt underſtood this Sect, having himſelf made a Trial of it, (beginning of his Life) ſays, " that they were for the
" moſt Part Men of Quality ‡;" and as ſuch, it may be, they were not ſo likely to ſwallow Superſtitions received by the Vulgar. It is certain that one of the principal Points they are charged with, is the denying the Being of Angels and Spirits. It may be, at firſt, (for we cannot ſuppoſe that their Opinions ſprung up all together, and at once,) they only denied what was generally received concerning evil Angels; and that their Adverſaries branded them with a falſe Imputation. It is not doubted but they received the Books of Moſes as Canonical Scripture, (and it is generally believed, the Reſt of the Jewiſh Canon likewiſe, Scaliger's Elench. Trihæreſ. c. xvi.) and we find in them ſuch frequent

 Mention

* P. II. l. 5. ‡ Ant. l. 18. c. ii.

Mention of the Appearance of good Angels, as is inconſiſtent with denying their Exiſtence; and we are no where told how they got over that Difficulty, or what Conſtruction they put upon thoſe Paſſages ‖; at leaſt, at firſt, they denied the Being of ſuch Angels only as were evil: And the Generality of the People believing the ſuperſtitious Opinions they had picked up in Chaldea, which were very much augmented by receiving (and that too not all at once) the apocryphal Books into the Canon of their Scriptures, in which we have ſuch Notions of Lemures, Spectres, Angels and Devils, laid ſuch monſtrous Opinions to the Sadducees Charge, as they themſelves might not profeſs: However this be, they would not be the only Perſons to whom have been aſcribed Doctrines little agreeable to their real Sentiments by forced Arts, as is but too plain from the Controvertiſts of our own Times. What I have been ſaying on this Head is, however, no more than Conjecture, though

‖ It is not impoſſible but that the Hiſtorians who have mentioned them, may have miſrepreſented their Doctrine perhaps.

I do not ſee how they could have continued, as it is certain they did, in Communion with the Jewiſh Church, if they had really held the Opinions they are charged with, or have got into their Hands, in the Reign of Alexander, all the Places in the Sanhedrim*, or have had ſo many of their Sect promoted to the High Prieſthood. And when the Phariſees ſprung up as a Sect, and appeared in Oppoſition to the Sadducees, having intoxicated their ſuperſtitious Underſtandings with their apocryphal Chaldee Notions, which by that Time were improved by their Converſation with the Greeks, they dreamed of nothing but Devils and Spectres, carried the Power of the Devil to a ſurpriſing Height, and conceived every Thing they did not underſtand, under a Notion of evil Spirits. They gave Names derived from them to ſuch Qualities and Properties as were beyond their Knowledge; and, to affront and run down the Sadducees, formed their Manner of Speech and Expreſſions, in all poſſible Inſtances, from Angels and Devils.

* Maimon. Halac. Sanhedr. c. 11. Joſeph. Ant. l. xx. c. 8.

Thus they ſaid that all Diſtempers were brought upon Mankind by evil Spirits; eſpecially, ſays Doctor Hammond, (on John vii. 20.) a great Advocate for the Reality of Poſſeſſions, "thoſe who were more ſtrangely "affected, without any viſible Cauſe of it, "were generally thought to ſuffer this from "the Devil's getting Power to poſſeſs them:" And every Diſeaſe they did not underſtand, and the Effects of which they could not account for, (and they were withal very ignorant both in Anatomy and Phyſic) they attributed to their Power, and ſuppoſed that ſome Devil or other entered into and poſſeſſed ſuch Perſons as a Puniſhment for their Sins. And, it may be, they gave (as we find the Rabbins, and particularly Maimonides, who was both the moſt learned, and the ſobereſt of them, afterwards did) the Names of Devils to Diſtempers. "Cordicus, "ſay they, is a Spirit which ſeizes on him "who drinks too much Wine out of the "Wine-preſs; and of Shibta they ſay, "it is a Spirit which ſeizes on Children by "the Neck, upon the Sinews behind the

"Neck,

" Neck, and dryeth them up from their " Uſe and Strength till it kills them *." And Maimonides ſays, " A Man who is troubled " with an evil Spirit, and ſays when the " Sickneſs begins upon him, write a Bill of " Divorcement to my Wife, he ſays as good " as nothing, for he is *non compos Mentis* †." Thus a Man was no ſooner ſeized with any ſtrange Effect, the Cauſe of which was not viſible, than they immediately cried, the Devil had laid hold of and poſſeſſed him. And hence it is that we meet with ſo many Dæmoniacks in the Goſpels, and find them mentioned, not as a Thing that was ſurpriſing or unuſual at that Time, though it would be difficult to meet with any ſuch now, unleſs it be where the true Spirit of Popery ſhews itſelf in the credulous and ignorant Superſtition of the People, and triumphs over the Judgment of Mankind. They ſeem to have been nothing more than Perſons affected with Madneſs, Fits, Convulſions, the Falling-Sickneſs, or ſome ſuch Diſtemper, which was beyond their Skill and Capacity

* Talm. in Gittin. per 7. vide R. Solom. & Niſſim. ibid.
† In Gernſhin. per 2.

Capacity to comprehend. As in the Caſe of Lunacy and Madneſs: They not knowing how to account for ſuch a Diſorder of the Mind and Body, and Senſes, eſpecially when it proceeded from no Diſeaſe or viſible Cauſe, they never looked into the Symptoms or nature of the Diſtemper, but concluded, and believed, that ſuch Perſons were acted and troubled by ſome evil Spirit, and gave all ſuch the Term Δαιμονιζομενοι: and the Generality of thoſe who have that Name given them in the Goſpels, appear, by their wild and raving Behaviour, to be Madmen. And accordingly "he hath a Devil, and is mad; "why hear ye him?" John x. 20. are two Terms of the ſame Signification joined together to denote the ſame Thing. "I ſup-"poſe (ſays the great Mr. Mede on the "Place, who tells us that he was perſuaded, "till he ſhould hear better Reaſon to the "contrary, that the Dæmoniacks were no "other than what we call Madmen and Lu-"naticks) the latter Words to be an Expli-"cation of the former." So again John vii. 20. "The People anſwered and ſaid, "Thou haſt a Devil who goeth about to "kill thee?" The only Senſe of which can

be,

be, " Thou art certainly mad to talk thus." And agreeably to this, when the Jews taxed our Saviour with Inconſiſtence in his Diſcourſe, they tell him that he had a Devil. John viii. 48. and again, " Now we " know that thou haſt a Devil. Abraham " is dead, and the Prieſts ; and thou ſay'ſt, " If a Man keep my ſaying, he ſhall never " taſte Death." ver. 52. And on the contrary, they who had a right Underſtanding of our Saviour's Meaning, and concluded from the Cohærence of his Diſcourſe, that he muſt be in his right Senſes, ſaid, " Theſe " are not the Words of him that hath a " Devil." John x. 21. " Theſe are neither " the Words nor Actions of a Madman," as Hammon paraphraſes it. Their common Phraſe and Manner of Speech being to ſay, that ſuch Perſons as were mad, were poſſeſſed by a Devil. The old Greeks had not an unlike Opinion of their mad People ; they attributed their Diſorder to their being delivered over to Furies by the Gods, which deprived them of their Reaſon, as is plain from the Stories of Hercules, Alcmæon, Oreſtes, &c. And their Cure they generally attributed

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to Expiations, or the Performance of ſome religious Rite or other. Though ſome of them, it is certain, have had their Senſes reſtored to them by the Uſe of Phyſick, which ſhews plainly that their Indiſpoſition was within the Power of natural Means of Cure. There was ſomething like this too amongſt the old Romans, who called their Madmen * *Cerriti & Larvati.* They were called *Cerriti*, as if they were *à Cerere percuſſi. Larvati*, is the ſame as *Larvis*, i. e. *Dæmonibus acti*, as *Feſtus* ſays your *Larvati* are *Furioſi & Mente moti, quaſi Larvis exterriti*; as if they had been frighted with Spirits.

But the Jews, in our Saviour's Time, believed not only ſuch Perſons as were mad to be poſſeſſed by the Devil, but thoſe likewiſe who were afflicted with any Diſeaſe, which was attended with ſtrange and ſurpriſing Symptoms. This is plain from the Perſon who is ſaid to be poſſeſſed, Mat. xvii. 18. but

* Hellade percuſſâ Marius cum præcipitat ſe;
Cerritus fuit, an commotæ Crimine Mentis
Abſolves Hominem, & Sceleris damnabis eundem.
Horace, Sat. l. 2. Sat. 3. v. 277.

but was nothing more than one who had an Epilepſy or the Falling Sickneſs, as is clear from the Deſcription given us of his Diſorder, " His falling into the Fire and Water *," and from what the Father attributes to the Operations of the Spirit, *Luke* ix. 39. were we have an Account of the ſame Perſon, " Lo, a Spirit taketh him, and he ſuddenly " crieth out, and it teareth him that he foameth " again, and bruiſing him, hardly departeth " from him." And from his being worſe at the Change of the Moon, as ſuch People frequently are, he is ſaid to be *a Lunatick*, *Mat.* xvii. 15. But the Effects of the Diſeaſe being ſomething extraordinary, the People imagin'd them to proceed from the *Devil*. So likewiſe the Woman who had been for eighteen Years crooked who " was bowed together, " and could in no wiſe lift up herſelf," *Luke* xiii. 11. is ſaid to have " had a Spirit of In- " firmity eighteen Years," and to have been " bound by Satan."

It was not an unlike Opinion the *Jews* had of the Cure, in ſome Caſes at leaſt, of their diſeaſed Perſons, they attributing it to a *good*

 Angel,

* Ver. 15.

Angel, as is ſufficiently evident from the Story of our Saviour's curing the Man at the *Pool of Bethesda*. The Waters of the Pool had a healing Quality; the daily waſhing the Entrails of the Sacrifices, eſpecially at their great Feaſts, when there were many Thouſands of them offer'd, the Congelations of the Blood, and what was waſh'd off from the Carcaſes, ſinking to the Bottom, moved or troubled the Waters, and communicated to them a ſanatary Virtue, inſomuch, that whoſoever firſt ſtept in was cured of *whatſoever Diſeaſe he had*. This the *Jews* aſcribed to the Operations of an Angel, or *to the Angel of the Lord*, as it is in the *Alexandrian Manuſcript*; tho' it is very plain to any one, who conſiders the Story, and the Cures which have been perform'd by the Application of the warm vital Parts of Beaſts, that it was a natural, not a miraculous, Way of Curing.

The *Jews* being, as we have ſeen, of Opinion, that ſeveral Diſeaſes, eſpecially ſuch as diſturbed the Underſtanding and diſtorted the Body, tho' not at all unnatural in themſelves, were owing to the Perſon's being ſeiz'd by evil Spirits, and poſſeſſed by a Devil; and their common

common Form and Manner of Speech being framed agreeably to ſuch a Conception, the Language of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, was neceſſarily to be formed upon the ſame Model that it might be ſuited to their Apprehenſion. It was their Purpoſe to manifeſt the Divinity of their Miſſion by working Miracles, and, amongſt others, by curing Diſtempers; not to undeceive Men in a Point, which it was a Phyſician's Buſineſs to examine, and the Conſequence of which did not at all concern their eternal Intereſt. They do not therefore trouble themſelves with the natural or metaphyſical Cauſes of Things, but as if they would ſet Bounds to our Curioſity, and turn our Thoughts from ſuch Objects, the Knowledge of which, is not neceſſary to us, the better to engage our Attention to ſuch Subjects as more immediately concern our Duty and Salvation. They do not attempt to undeceive the People in this trivial Error, any more than in their Opinion of the Power of Magick and Enchantments, but to perſuade them to draw the natural and proper Conſequences from their Diſcourſes, and the Miracles they wrought. And, the better to attain this End, in all their Reaſonings and Actings, they accom-

modate themſelves to the vulgar Prejudices and to the Opinions commonly received. The ſame Method are Philoſophers and the Learned obliged to take, whenſoever they ſpeak to the Populace, or write for the Uſe of common People; and juſt ſo does every ſkilful Phyſician, when he viſits an hypocondriacal Patient; he does not endeavour to convince him, that his Diſtemper is all Imagination, but ſuits his Converſation to the Circumſtances and Diſpoſition of the Perſon, and preſcribes agreeably to the Rules of his Art. This is what our bleſſed Saviour has done with moſt admirable Patience, Goodneſs and Wiſdom. And the ſame Courſe muſt every one take, who is to have any Thing to do with our preſent *Americans*, who have the very ſame Opinion of *Diſeaſes* and *Devils*, as the *Jews* antiently had, and who have a Company of Exorciſts who pretend to cure their Patients by frighting away the evil Spirit with their antick Tricks and hideous Geſtures.

Let us examine our Saviour's Carriage in curing the Madman, *Matt.* viii. 28. *Mark* v. 1. *Luke* viii. 26. and we ſhall find it moſt admirably ſuited to ſuch a Patient. This Story

Story is more particularly related, and carries, as I ſaid, ſtronger Marks of a real Poſſeſſion than any other. And if I ſhall not, in explaining this Miracle, keep ſo cloſe to the Letter as his Lordſhip has done, I as much venerate and acknowledge the divine Power which performed it, as he can do; and my Reader will, I believe, whether he joins with me in Opinion as to the Reality of *Poſſeſſions* or not, own that it is as really and truly a Miracle, according to his Lordſhip's Notion of a Miracle, and as certain Evidence of a divine Miſſion and Authority, to reſtore a Madman to his Senſes by the Force of a bare Word, and ſpeak him into the right Uſe of his Reaſon, as to eject a Parcel of Devils out of him, and to deſtroy a Herd of Swine by a Command, as by a Legion of evil Spirits. So that I ſhan't fear being at all ſuſpected to favour Mr. *Woolſton*'s Hypotheſis, which I am as far as any one living from approving. It appears then, by the Deſcription given us of this Man, that his Body was well and free from any Malady, and, which is common with Madmen, that he had a ſurpriſing Strength, but being diſorder'd in his Senſes, he thought he had a Legion of Devils within him. It may be, he believ'd that the *Devils* which poſſeſſed People, were the Souls of

of evil Men. This was certainly an Opinion that was current amongſt the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, and which they might borrow, as they did, a great many Things not contradictory to their Scriptures from the Schools of the *Platoniſts*. *Grotius* tells us ſo from *Theophylact* *. And *human unclean Souls* are reckon'd amongſt *Devils* in the Fragments of the antient Book of *Enoch*. *Juſtin Martyr* is of the ſame Opinion ‡, and therefore calls them *Dæmoniacks*, who were poſſeſſed by the Souls of the Dead ‖. And *Joſephus* expreſſly tells us, " that the Spirits which we call " Devils, are only the Souls of wicked " Men, that have gotten Poſſeſſion of " living Bodies, and would undoubtedly " deſtroy them, if they were not prevented †. And if ſo, this Madman might likewiſe, agreeably to their prevailing Opinion, believe one Man might have many Souls, and be poſſeſſed with many Spirits; and that having reflected too much on this Subject, he had troubled and diſorderd his Brain. This perhaps made him retire from the Converſation of the World; and, agreeably to the Fancy he had poſſeſſed himſelf with, as ſuch Perſons love

* On *Mat.* viii. 28. ‡ *Apol.* i. p. 44. ‖ *Apol.* ii. p. 65.
† *De Bello*, l. vii. c. 25.

love to ſooth their Melancholy, he took up his Reſidence amongſt the Tombs, where the Solitude of the Place confirm'd him in his feign'd Opinion, and was, as he thought, an Abode agreeable to his Devils. This Perſon met our Bleſſed Saviour, " worſhiped him, " and cried with a loud Voice" as if it had been the Devils ſpeaking thro' his Mouth, that he would not *torment them*, and *beſought him* that if he did caſt him out of his Body, he would not ſend him directly to Hell, the Place of their Puniſhment and Reſtraint, but, as a more tolerable State of Miſery, ſuffer them to *go into a Herd of Swine*, which was feeding juſt by. In curing this Frantick our Saviour did not endeavour to make him ſenſible of the Falſeneſs of the Notion he had confirm'd himſelf in, but humour'd his way of thinking, ſpoke to him as if he was ſpeaking to the Devils, commanded them to come out of him; and to give the Madman a Proof of his Cure, as his Devils had deſired to go into the Swine, he granted their Requeſt; but as if this had not been ſufficient to heal his wounded Spirit, to convince him that the Swine really had the Devils he imagin'd in himſelf, they run with great Violence down a Precipice into the Sea,

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This ſtruck his Imagination ſo ſtrongly, he believing in the miraculous Power of *Chriſt*, (who at the ſame Time by his Omnipotence operated on his Blood, removed the Cauſe of his Diſorder, and reſtored his Spirits to their proper Tone) that he perſuaded himſelf he was cured, acted and talk'd like one who had been deliver'd from ſo many Devils. In this, and all the like Caſes, all the Intention our Saviour had, was to cure the Diſtemper, not the Miſtake of the People; as they attributed their Infirmities to Poſſeſſions, he left them in the Belief that the Cure was Ejection. "He "always," ſays the Dean of *Sarum*, "avoids "the Enquiry into the natural or metaphy- "ſical Cauſes of things, (as in the Caſe of the "Man that was born blind, and of the eigh- "teen Perſons upon whom the Tower in "*Siloam* fell) and bids Men apply the external "Facts only to themſelves, and make a right "Uſe of them for their Improvement. And "the ſame may be ſaid concerning that Power "which we find ſo often aſcribed to the "Devil over the Bodies of Men, to inflict "ſeveral Diſeaſes; particularly what is called "Poſſeſſion. The Teſtimony our Saviour "gave of his Power and Authority, was the working

" Working of Miracles.—The Principal of
" theſe, was the curing all Sorts of Diſeaſes,
" of how long Continuance, and of how
" great Malignity ſoever. Now this Power
" was equally evidenced, whatever the
" phyſical Cauſe of the Diſtempers were.
" So that it is not material as to the religious
" Uſes to be made of them, what Cauſe they
" are aſcribed to. It may be an Error in
" natural Philoſophy, but by the Truth of
" Religion is not at all affected by it. And
" hence it is that the Writers of the New
" Teſtament, though they perfectly agree in
" every Thing that is eſſential to Religion,
" yet they are not ſo very nice and exact in
" the more remote Circumſtances of their
" Relations. And therefore a Fact is ſome-
" times repreſented in different Expreſſions,
" according to the Notions of the Perſons to
" whom it was delivered, or the different
" Views of them that related it. Thus in
" the 17th of St. *Mat.* xiv. The Man who
" applies to our Saviour to heal his Son, in
" his Deſcription of the Diſeaſe, uſes ſeveral
" Expreſſions ſignifying the ſame Thing; as
" that he was *lunatick*, that he was *ſore vexed*
" or as it is in the Original κακῶς πάσχει *he*

" *ſuffered grievouſly.* And in the curing of " him, it is ſaid at the 18th ver. that Jeſus " rebuked the Devil and he departed out of " him. From which Account it is evident " that ſome of theſe Expreſſions muſt be " metaphorical, becauſe the ſame Effect is " aſcribed to different Cauſes. So that it is " moſt probable that theſe Denominations " were given from different Conſiderations " of the ſame Diſeaſe; as that of *Lunacy*, " from the periodical Revolution of it; that " of *evil ſuffering* from the Effects; and that " of *Poſſeſſion*, from the reputed Cauſe. And " if every one of theſe be included the true " Inference to be drawn is this, that Chriſt, " who by the Word of his Mouth, healed " the Perſon thus affected was ſuperior to all " theſe Cauſes*." It is no Wonder this Opinion of *Poſſeſſion* ſhould continue in the Chriſtian Church. The Converts, both *Jewiſh* and *Gentile*, brought (together with *the Myſtical way of interpreting Scripture*†) as many of their old Superſtitions over with them to their new Religion, at leaſt as they could think conſiſtent with it. The *Jews* their Opinions of *Devils*, and the *Gentiles* theirs

* Origin and Cauſe of Moral Evil. p. 278, &c.
† See his Lordſhip's 3d. ch.

theirs of their *Gods*, which the Chriſtians were willing enough they ſhould retain, provided they would believe them to be *Devils* too. And then the moſt antient Tranſlations of the Scriptures, the *Septuagint*; that of *Aquila* of *Ponticus*, who made uſe of a *Hebrew* Copy that was extreamly corrupted by the *Rabbins*; of *Theodoſion* of *Epheſus*, who took the Liberty both to leave out and to add great Things, as *Origen* has obſerved; and the old *Italick* Verſon; were all of them form'd upon the *Jewiſh* Taſte and Opinions. And theſe the firſt *Chriſtians* were obliged to make uſe of, their being very few of them who had a thorough Underſtanding of *Hebrew*. And when *Origen* publiſhed his *Hexapla*, and *Jerom* review'd and amended the old *Italick* Verſion, tho' they, being both of them Men of the greateſt Learning, ſtripped thoſe Works of a great many old Superſtitions, yet, not being perfectly free from *Chaldeiſm* themſelves, eſpecially *Origen* as appears by his Writings againſt *Celſus*, their Performances could not but retain a Tincture of it. They had both of them been forced to make uſe of *Phariſees*, who were the great Admirers of the *Talmud*, to teach them *Hebrew* and *Chaldee*,

Chaldee, who it is probable might insinuate some of their Prejudices into them; from which, and their examining the different Versions which went before them, it is no wonder their Works should sometimes smell of *Chaldaick* Superstitions. And then the supposititious *Shepherd of Hermas*, St. *Barnabas*'s Epistle, the *Sybilline Oracles*, and abundance of other forged Writings, which were received, some of them even by the Orthodox, into the Canon of Scripture, being stuffed with the Apparitions of Angels and Dæmons, and the like superstitious Notions, could not but greatly contribute to the retaining many of the old Superstitions. And when the *Monks* sprung up, their Writers having brought the Doctrine of *Possessions* to the greatest Perfection, they founded upon it their Arts of imposing upon a bigotted People so successfully that they drew the whole Wealth of the Laity into their Hands, and enriched themselves at the Expence of a deluded People, who parted not only with their Estates but Understandings also. But *Protestantism* has introduced a Freedom of Thinking which is inconsistent with their Doctrine; and if I have made use of that Freedom

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to deſtroy the Foundation they built their Arts of Impoſing upon, his Lordſhip, whom I reverence and eſteem, and know to be a ſincere Proteſtant will, I hope, excuſe me, tho' I have advanced an Argument diſagreeable to his Way of thinking againſt the Superſtition of a Church I know him to be a hearty Enemy to. No One can more than I do eſteem his Lordſhip's great Strength of Reaſoning, his vaſt Learning and thorough Knowledge of the Fathers, which have fitted him to adorn his high Station, and enable him to write an irrefragable Defence of our Bleſſed Saviour's Miracles, which muſt always be reſpected by every ſincere Chriſtian, and poſſeſs all Men with the Deference which is juſtly due to his Dignity and Perſon; and if I have noted any Thing, which has fallen without due Thought from his Pen, let it be aſcribed to his Uneaſineſs at being ſilent, while Infidelity talked ſo loud, and appeared boldly without either Shame or Reſtraint.

FINIS.